

### **3: Analysis of Ponting's photography**

The aim of this study is to address a deficiency in close analysis of Ponting's images by studying relevant literature, as has been done in Chapter 2, and by examining Ponting's photographs and film, which will be done now. A visual semiotics methodology is used, based on a combination of discourse analysis (Gee 1990, 2005) and visual analysis (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006). Ponting's book is also used to enable fuller understanding. Overall, the images and the book form a synergistic relationship, the different codes, visual and verbal, each enhancing the understanding of the other (Hodge & Kress 1983), so that the total effect is greater than the sum of the individual ones.

Ponting's work in Antarctica was different from his previous assignments. While the overall task was similar to that involved in his photography in Japan, India and other lands, Antarctica represented a greater commitment in time, an isolated location, more arduous conditions, and huge technical challenges. In place of local inhabitants, he was depicting a small, highly specialised and purpose-directed microcosm of British society and culture, mostly from naval and scientific contexts, in an uninhabited land. His role in the expedition was functional, but he intended to generate post-expedition income for himself by exhibiting and lecturing on his work, and this influenced his selection of subjects and the way he presented them.

There are a very large number of stills, and the focus here is on a representative selection: landscapes, portraits, activities (individual and group, work-related and recreational), and wildlife photographs. There is one colour photograph. The range includes some images that exhibit a more artistic approach, along with those intended primarily to provide a scientific or historical record.

#### ***The camera artist***

Photographs of Ponting, posed with cameras, have been included in previous chapters. Figure 1 (p. 2) shows him kneeling in snow behind his cumbersome telephoto apparatus, his shadowed face in sharp concentrating profile, his hands

in big fur gloves which he would have had to remove for the more precise work. In Figure 6 (p. 27) he stands alongside his large and heavy cinematograph, again in the snow and gloved, but this time facing the viewer. But many hours of Ponting's work took place alone and indoors. Figure 7 (below) shows him in his darkroom.



7. Herbert Ponting at work in the darkroom, 22 July 1911.

The subject is dramatised by striking contrast of darkness and light. Light comes from a source outside the picture, and falls centrally, on the profiled face, upper body, hands and equipment. The camera artist is focused and calm. He looks here more like a scientist than an artist. In *The Great White South* he refers to the darkroom as 'my laboratory' (124). Perhaps this self-portrait was partly a statement of equality.

Throughout *The Great White South*, Ponting is a presence with which the reader quickly comes to feel comfortable. Nevertheless, he reveals only a limited amount about himself, and certainly not the 'inmost soul' he referred to in his 'outstanding personalities' chapter (160). Even after close study of his work,

Ponting the man remains in many ways very private. Photographs of the darkroom, his own separate space in the hut, show none of the personal items we see in his portrait of Scott in his space (see Fig. 15). Ponting knew how to be sociable, yet there was always a separateness in him. Meares' poem about him in the expedition's *South Polar Times* refers to him, banteringly but revealingly, as 'Professor Ponting', as well as the friendlier 'Ponko'. After the expedition, Ponting never attended reunions. When the men drank to 'Sweethearts and Wives' at the Midwinter Dinner, we have no idea of whom he thought, if anyone. He says that his 'inseparable companions' were his cameras (Ponting 2001:2). In 'Herbert Ponting at work in the darkroom', once again, he does not reveal much about himself. It is a very private self-portrait.

He quite frequently represented himself in photographs, but rarely with other people. He did not include himself in large group celebration photographs (Figs. 19 & 20), although he could have managed it technically. As Chapter 2 has shown, he seems to have wanted to emphasise, both during and after the expedition, that he was very much part of it, but he was at the same time acutely aware of his separateness from the others. A sense of alienation, it has been argued, is what compels photographers 'to put a camera between themselves' and their subjects (Sontag 1977:10).

In the majority of Ponting's self-portraits, the identity constructed is explicitly linked to his being a camera artist. Apart from the telephoto apparatus, cine-camera and darkroom photographs, he made a composite photograph of himself with lantern projector showing his Japan slides (Fig. 4) and a photograph of himself lying on a plank jutting out from the *Terra Nova* and using a movie camera (see Fig. 38). An individual's perception of his or her own identity is enhanced by links to symbols having meanings growing out of interaction with society (Stryker & Serpe 1982). Ponting was using the tools of his trade to reinforce, within representation, the identity as camera artist that he had fashioned for himself. The photographs, and the book, were major parts of his narrativisation of the self, a reflexive sense of biographic continuity (Giddens 1991). His pictures of himself working in Antarctica served a self-validating function.

## ***Approaching Antarctica***

The photographer makes viewing choices about subject, composition, point of view, focus, framing and other elements of style (Lutz & Collins1993). In Figure 8, Ponting has set up his camera on the ice a little distance from the *Terra Nova* held up in the ice pack. It is the Antarctic's view of the approaching expedition.



8. Terra Nova held up in the pack, 13 Dec. 1910.

The ship is motionless, only a light breeze in the sails, very small ripples in the water. The sky is full of thin cloud, and it is quite dark above. At the eye level of the ship's hull, sky and ice merge in an almost seamless continuum. The ice is billowing up at the prow, as if to stop the ship getting through, and it is encroaching around the stern. Two men can be discerned on deck, and the head and shoulders of a third, near the prow. The ship has majesty, but it is, like the Ancient Mariner's, 'As idle as a painted ship / Upon a painted ocean'. There is a sense of silence and isolation.

The picture creates a sense of expectation. It evokes thoughts of other representations of expedition ships in the sea of ice: Wilson's watercolour and ink '*Discovery* with parhelia', a dark ship silhouetted against a yellow-lit background, strange double circles of light behind its sails; and Hurley's striking photographs of the death throes of the trapped *Endurance*. Compared to these, Ponting's photograph is unemotional. He is performing his role, making a record of an event in their journey, continuing a tradition of photographing the expedition ship in the Antarctic, but with an artistic feeling for composition that lifts the photograph beyond the level of the everyday.

### ***The landscape***

In Antarctica, Ponting took many photographs of the landscape. The first of these to be discussed here was produced in response to Scott's remark to Ponting that a panoramic telephotograph of the peaks of the Western Mountains across McMurdo Sound 'would be of lasting value to geography' (Ponting 2001:198). Ponting took the photograph of Mt Lister and surrounding peaks (Fig. 9) in the late summer of 1911, from 130 km away.



9. Telephoto of Mt Lister, 10 Feb. 1911

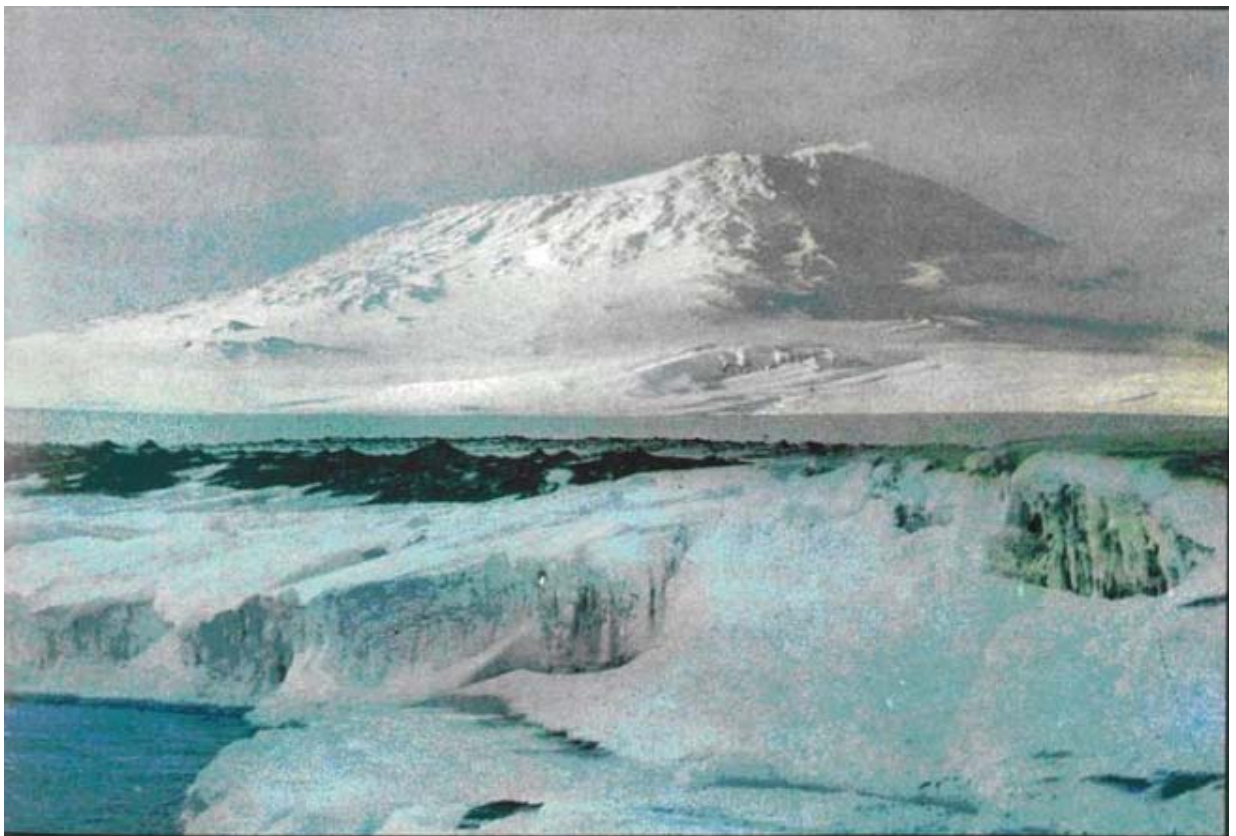
This too may be compared with Frank Hurley's images: like Hurley's 'Panoramas of South Georgia Island', it shows a landscape of snow- and ice-covered mountains, rocky outcrops and dark shadows. Hurley's photographs were taken from an extremely high viewpoint; Ponting likewise knew that telephotography would distort perspective, and that he needed to get above the level of the iceberg in the foreground to counter this. Accordingly, he chose his position on the Erebus moraine. He says in *The Great White South* that he made his mountains look high by not giving a photograph too much sky, and he has followed this rule here. In contrast to some of Hurley's photographs of the South Georgia scene, Ponting's photograph of Mt Lister has no trace of humans, no figures, no ship, no settlement. The mood is desolate.

Teddy Evans, Scott's second-in-command, described these mountains as 'sinister and relentless' (Evans 1920:88), but Ponting had always found them very beautiful. His picture is designed to give far more than the required



comprehensive view of a topographical area, and conveys a mix of beauty and dread. It is composed of horizontals and pyramidal shapes forming a redoubtable barrier. Foremost among the pyramids, Mt Lister reaches in sombre white majesty toward the layer of darkening sky. Swathes of white cloud track across the photograph, paralleling the dark shoreline and the lines of wave and reflection in the dark sea. A white, jagged, decaying iceberg cuts across the foreground from right to left. Its largest part also approaches a pyramid shape.

The contrast of light and dark creates the power of this image of brooding eternal calm. One may be reminded of the artist J.M.W. Turner's response to mountains of Europe, the lifelessness of Alpine rocks and glaciers, his chill restriction of colour in 'The Mer de Glace'. The influence in Turner's work of the concept of the sublime (Finley 1979) is echoed in the Ponting photograph more than a century later and half a world away.



10. Mt Erebus

Ponting always had the exhibitionality of his images in mind. In Antarctica, he experimented with a form of colour photography using Autochrome plates, introduced in 1907 by the Lumière brothers in France, in which a panchromatic emulsion layer was exposed through a screen of starch grains in primary colours. These plates had a relatively short life and many of Ponting's Antarctic exposures were spoiled due to time and conditions. A few have been published, and 'Mt Erebus' (Fig. 10, previous page) is one of them.

The mood is serene, conveyed by harmony in composition with quiet variations of blue. Apart from some white on the mountain and a line of black rock or shadows across the middle, blues dominate, with some pink in the upper right and in the mid-foreground conveying a very ephemeral sense of softness. The photograph is a pleasing one, but it lacks the stark drama of the shadowy Mt Lister photograph. 'Mt Erebus' would nevertheless have had high exhibition value for Ponting, as an early effort in colour and a fine depiction of an Antarctic scene.

In *The Great White South* (pages 149-150) Ponting described the scene where the face of the Barne Glacier meets the sea-ice, and its effect on him.

The prospect that opened out was of arresting grandeur ... It was not so much the austere beauty of the scene that so dominated me, as its utter desolation, and its intense and wholly indescribable loneliness. I stood awhile beneath the shivering stars, with every sense alert, striving to detect some sound; but the stillness about me was profound ...

I knew then what Service meant when he wrote:

*Were you ever out in the Great Alone, when the moon was awful clear,*

*And the icy mountains hemmed you in with a silence you most could hear?*

An eerie feeling crept over me in the presence of this majesty of silence: a feeling of exhilaration and awe ....

Ponting would refer again to the Great Alone in *The Great White South* (189). Describing his last sight of the polar party, he wrote: 'They were destined never to return from the heart of the Great Alone'.



Two photographs (Figs. 11 and 12) show what he saw and felt when confronted by the glacier. In the first, light glints off ice and shadow gives it menace as the face of the glacier looms above the sledger and dog team.



11. Point of the Barne Glacier, where it turns round to the Bay before Cape Barne, Sept. 18 1911.

Ponting quite frequently included individuals in his landscapes, which some have found contrived. The inclusion of the sledger in Figures 11 and 12 gives an immediate sense of the size of the glacier face. It also allows viewer identification with the expeditioners in the photographs, and thus more interaction with the image.

In Figure 12, Mt Erebus appears above the glacier, the distance between it and the ice cliff foreshortened by the visual angle, and the scene is sharply lit under a black sky. The crenellated cliff is a mass of well-defined crevassed and broken ice forms, perpendicular and megalithic at the top, cascading at the foot. Glacier and mountain, massive and imperturbable, tower over a human figure with a sledge, looking like an ant on the page.



12. Sledger at the foot of glacier and Mt Erebus

Spufford (1997), examining another Ponting photograph of the Barne, also with a sledger, believed the silhouette had been inked on to the print. Being unable to study the original, this researcher cannot agree or disagree, but there are a number of photographs like it, some including the lone sledger, sometimes specifically identified as Anton, in slightly differing positions and posture but always apparently looking up at the glacier face. Spufford is certainly correct when he says: 'The glacier's imperturbable grandeur is being compared to this emblematic man's smallness .... It is a sublime image' (37).

In *The Great White South*, Ponting captioned this picture 'The home of the echoes', and he wrote: 'So it was *here* where dwelt the spirits of the Great White South!' (150). It is one of his few allusions to a sense of the supernatural in Antarctica. From December 1911, it is a fairly late photograph, taken a few months before Ponting left Antarctica, and while Scott and his men would have been struggling their way up the Beardmore Glacier on their way to the Pole. For Ponting, now awaiting the return of the *Terra Nova* at base camp, this would have been a time of review.

Natural scenes presented as landscapes are mediated by culture (Mitchell 2002). Ponting was a product of the British Victorian and Edwardian cultures, but he had travelled widely. He knew the Alps and Mt Fuji. It has been argued that the Antarctic ice was a blank mirror reflecting back at the explorers their own characters (Pyne 2004). Ponting was in Antarctica a full year, completely involved in his work. 'Sledger at the foot of glacier and Mt Erebus' is one of his last efforts to engage with the Antarctic landscape, and it tells us much about its effect on him. It is a crushing presence, irresistible to the artist, but reflecting back at him to an overwhelming degree his personal sense of aloneness.

Figure 13, from early in 1911, shows a variation from Ponting's more usual panorama of landscape: a close-up view of sastrugi, eroded snow formations carved by fierce katabatic winds sweeping down from the polar plateau.



13. Sastrugi on Barne Glacier, 21 Feb. 1911

The formation was known in the northern hemisphere, and Ponting may have been drawn here less by the requirement to record or illustrate than by a need to come to terms with Antarctica close up, and by his response to the shapes. He had read Scott's description of sastrugi in *The Voyage of the Discovery*, and knew that they often had fantastic shapes. In this photograph they are clearly defined and irregular. Some resemble stubby fingers reaching towards the viewer, who is positioned by the image's perspective to look down into the foreground sastrugi. There, at the bottom of the picture, is a dark gap, like a mouth. There is a suggestion of menace, perhaps another allusion to a sense of the supernatural in Antarctica.

Figure 14 shows another unusual photograph in Ponting's work, devoid of living creatures or outstanding scenic features. Aesthetically the intersecting tracks make a compelling image. With a high horizon, the image focuses on traces of life, of penguin and men, left on an almost blank landscape. They have passed here at different times: the creature of Antarctica, then the explorers—the dogged little survivor, and the intruders with their life support sledge.





14. Adélie penguin track and sledge track crossing, 8 Dec. 1911.

The pattern in the snow has caught Ponting's attention and in taking the photograph he has departed from his functional approach. Through the ephemerality of prints in the snow, the photograph encapsulates the transience of all life, its fragility especially stark in Antarctica. It was taken after the departure of the polar party. Ponting had said goodbye to them, watching, 'with a feeling of depression and loneliness of heart, until they shrank into the distance, half wondering if ever [he] should see them again' (2001:189).

Ponting's own time in Antarctica was now limited. Like the tracks in the snow, the place was already receding from him, even as he took his last photographs and prepared himself for departure. He had seen Shackleton's hut and was



moved by ‘the sight of this lone dwelling-place in these ghastly, uninhabited solitudes’ (59), but he knew that, apart from their own hut, there would remain scant trace of the expeditioners with whom he had spent more than a year, but from whom he was in many ways separate. Their paths crossed for that time. Something of a loner, and grateful for the privacy afforded by his darkroom, he nevertheless wished for acceptance, even friendship, from men he liked and admired. All that would soon be gone. The photograph may express something of these feelings too. X can mean cancel.

X can also signify an unknown or unnamed quantity or factor. Was Ponting thinking of this when he took the photograph? With him in Antarctica, Ponting had a Zeiss 12 X prismatic binocular and a 7 X 5 reflex camera. Was this moment linked in his mind to his technical equipment, with which he had made the attempt to know and understand Antarctica? Glasberg (2007:21) sees the X as ‘a play on composition itself, on the cultural and geophysical blankness of Antarctica, and on the problem of depicting it’. The photograph is an interesting enigma.

Images such as those discussed here contributed much to contemporary knowledge of the Antarctic environment. The wider audience, the public, was enraptured with them. The landscapes were responsible for much of Ponting’s enhanced reputation as an artist of the camera, and continue to be so today.

### ***The Leader***

Ponting did not regard himself primarily as a portraitist, but his photographs were often fine character-studies. The first of these to be considered here are photographs of Captain Scott.

The famous photograph ‘Scott writing his journal’ (Fig. 15) was taken in the spring of 1911, not long before he would leave on the polar journey. It is commemorative, an approach which was integral to Ponting’s brief, but it takes us to a level of understanding beyond that.



15. Scott writing his journal in the Cape Evans hut, 7 Oct. 1911.

The setting that engages the viewer is reminiscent of a stage in a proscenium theatre, with the actor poised to begin Act 1, surrounded by props which tell so much about him. Ponting wrote:

Our Leader had created a characteristic environment about him. Besides the numerous books ... there were many photographs of his wife and little son, Peter, about the walls of his cubicle; there was also a rack of pipes, and a jumble of Polar clothing. On his bunk lay his naval overcoat. (2001:164)

The mood is tranquil. Scott is composed, comfortable, even with a look of some self-satisfaction. His attention is on his writing. But although his gaze ignores the viewer, we do not feel excluded; it is more as if we have happened by his cubicle, and caught him, unobserved, in the act of a regular and dedicated task.

The items around him are allusions to his background and life at home, all carefully selected with space constraints in mind. On a separate level, they serve

as props for the way Scott chose to present himself to his men. He is ‘the Leader’, the naval officer, self-contained, a thinker, reader and writer; but also a family man, a human being who loves and is loved.

The scene indicates his liking for order. Everything is neatly allocated to its place. Order is also emphasised by the horizontal and vertical lines of the structures which provide the functionality of the space—the shelving and table. Everything is boxed in. The outstanding diagonal line, the table support, extends from the right-hand corner of the photograph up to the figure of Scott. The horizontals then lead the eye leftwards, across the photograph, towards a fuller understanding of the man. Similarly, the juxtaposition of light and shade in the photograph assists the viewer to single out details—the engrossed face and the fur gloves (the immediate demands of the Antarctic), and the photographs on the wall, a label dangling from the suitcase under the bed (the call of home).

‘Composition in imagery is the equivalent of syntax in language’ (Harrison 2003:55), enabling the viewer to make sense of what the artist wants to communicate. The composition of this photograph achieves an effect comparable to the syntax of passages about Scott in *The Great White South*. In the section headed ‘A kindly Leader’ (163), for example, Ponting uses ability words (‘organising ability’, ‘sound judgement’, ‘self-reliance’), character traits (‘quiet and unassuming yet masterful’, ‘admirable attitude’), and explicitly links exterior appearance with interior qualities (‘his face was a faithful index to the resolution and courage that dominated his soul’). He does not use cognitive statements (e.g., ‘I think’) and no terms of feeling and belief (e.g., ‘I feel’, ‘I believe’), but presents information in the manner of one simply stating facts. The effect of the photograph in Figure 15 is similar: this, Ponting says, is the way it was.

He makes many references in *The Great White South* to his admiration and liking for Scott. He often refers to Scott as the Leader, choosing this above ‘the Owner’, the more prosaic name given Scott by some expeditioners (Strange & Bashford 2008). The claim by Huntford, in his introduction to the 2001 edition of *The Great White South*, that Ponting recognised but glossed over many weaknesses in Scott, is at odds with the actual descriptions of the Leader in the

book and with depictions in carefully composed photographs like this one. The photograph, by showing us so much about the man, invites us to admire and like him too.

It is interesting to compare some of Ponting's photographs of Scott over time. Two photographs show the explorer before and after the Southern Journey in the late summer and early autumn of 1911 to lay depots of provisions for the polar attempt. They are very different from the controlled, home-allusive context of Figure 15.

The 'before' photograph (Fig. 16) shows the subject full-length and at some distance. It is taken against the sun, and a shadow falls across Scott's face, with the background dazzling white. Scott wears his sledge harness. The face is set. He is not shy of work. It will be a three-month journey. The mood is earnest, but optimistic. Behind him, Erebus smokes indifferently.

Scott is looking out of the frame of the photograph, at something the viewer cannot see. His gaze is steady. The caption points to the image's situated meaning (Gee 2005), that Scott is about to leave on a mission. His faraway gaze suggests he is preoccupied with it.



16. Capt. Scott just before leaving for the Southern Journey, 16 Jan. 1911.

The Southern Party was away for nearly three months. Ponting describes their return:

With their unkempt beards, they presented so remarkable a change of appearance that we recognised them with difficulty ... I proceeded to gather them in individually in full Polar kit [for photographs]. (Ponting 2001:109, 110)



The photograph he took of Scott (Fig. 17), like the ‘before’ one, was carefully posed in the Ponting tradition, but in other ways it is a complete contrast. The subject is still full-length, but closer and clearer.



17. Scott, 12 Apr. 1911.

In the visual semiotics of Western cultures, a frontal angle says, what we see here is part of our world, something we are involved with (Kress & van Leeuwen

2006), and viewer participation is enhanced by this. We see Scott much more aware of the potential pitfalls of the expedition: on the mission five ponies had died, and Scott was also 'losing all faith in the dogs' (quoted from Scott by Savours 1974:66). A dog-team had fallen into a crevasse. They had got them out with difficulty, Scott single-handedly rescuing the last two. He had regretfully laid his final depot short of its intended location.

All photographs are about ways of looking, about gazes of photographer, subjects, and viewer, which may intersect dynamically (Lutz & Collins 1993). Unlike the 'before' photograph, we see Scott's face clearly, and he is looking at us in a visual form of direct address. Acknowledging us explicitly, the subject asks something of us. To construct the image's message, the viewer will draw on the cultural models (Gee 2005) which are operant in his or her sociocultural group. Cultural models are families of connected images. They guide actions and interactions, and are used in judgement. Scott in this photograph might be likened to a knight of chivalry, a cultural model which was revived in British society and the arts from the late eighteenth century to World War One (Girouard 1981), and to which Ponting would refer in his Preface to *The Great White South*. The Leader is on a quest. The viewer is being invited to engage with the courage and worthiness of the quest.

There is, however, a certain aloofness in the facial expression which suggests Scott keeps his distance. Ponting knew him to be a man at times 'reticent ... silently weighted with the problems of the future' (165). There is ambivalence in the photograph, as there was in the man. The eyes are tired and knowing. The rugged look is in contrast to Figure 15 where he was surrounded by the 'civilisation' of the hut. The stance and facial expression are resolute. The only 'prop' here is his expeditioner's life support, the sledge. He stands in front of it, a foot resting on it, dominantly. This is Scott pared down to the essence of his eventual legend. The background is a white-out.

The composition is that of a right triangle with lengths in the ratio of 3:4:5. The figure fills the lefthand side, that with the ratio of 4. The feet, boots, and sledge ground it across the base, the shortest side. The composition suggests solidity,

capability, steadfastness. The subject and sledge are clearly defined in dark tones against a background of indifferent Antarctic white.

The subject seems to have travelled a long way, mentally, from the ‘before’ photograph (Fig. 16). It is a powerful image of human endeavour—albeit a particular kind: heroic masculine endeavour as typically represented in the iconography of Heroic Age expeditioners. With the viewer’s hindsight, it also works as an inspiring image of the indomitability of the human spirit, and as a sombre reminder of human fallibility. The image projects endurance and capability; but he did lay that last depot too short, and that would turn out to be disastrous.

Soon after Scott’s return with the depot-laying party, Ponting took him to a remarkable grotto in a glacier, and photographed him in there with the aid of flashlight (Fig. 18). Here Scott is identifiable only as a human figure, well wrapped and with an ice axe, silhouetted against the light of the outside world. It is reminiscent of Ponting’s more famous ‘Grotto in an iceberg’ photographs, where the *Terra Nova* and expeditioners are framed by the entrance to an ice cave, but here the power comes from our hindsight. It is striking image: the dark, silhouetted figure, the gloomy arching vault of the cavern looming, its icicles reaching down. Scott’s axe looks very inadequate. It is as if he is on the verge of entombment.



18. Ice-cave in Land's End Glacier. Capt. Scott. 28 Apr. 1911

The photograph recalls the awe of the landscapes. As in 'Sledger at the foot of glacier' (Fig. 12), the sublime is evoked. The figure in the ice could be seen as humanity, puny in confrontation with the great and sublime in nature.

## ***The expeditioners***

Ponting took many photographs of the expeditioners at work and recreation. This was an important part of his brief to fully document the venture.

Two famous large group indoor photographs from June 1911 show expeditioners seated around a festive table, Scott at the head. The first occasion was to celebrate Scott's birthday.



19. Scott's 43<sup>rd</sup> birthday, 6 June 1911.

The deep focus reaches from the dish of peas in the near foreground to Scott at the rear. The hut is decorated with sledging flags, and the effect is of banners of knights hung in a hall. This effect is even greater in the 'Midwinter Day Dinner' photograph (Fig. 20), where there are more Union Jacks, one right behind Scott.





20. Midwinter Day Dinner 1911.

Birthdays were regularly celebrated, and we know from Ponting's account in *The Great White South* that they were all having a very good time at the Midwinter dinner.

We sat down under festoons of bunting and coloured and embroidered silks to a feast, the bounteousness of which seemed almost incredible after our customary simple fare (141, 142)

In both pictures the table is a vector engaging the viewer by drawing the eye along it to the banners and to Scott, then to the others around the table. In images, vectors are part of a narrative process. In both pictures, a story is being told about the expedition and the relationships of its members. In the first picture, one man (Gran, the Norwegian ski instructor) happens to be looking intently at the camera—an image act (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006), establishing contact with the viewer. His gaze invites the viewer to enter into an imaginary relationship with the group in the picture. Their facial expressions are friendly, so

it is a relationship of social affinity that the viewer is entering. In the second picture the viewer meets no gazes. The picture ‘offers the represented participants to the viewer as items of information, objects of contemplation, impersonally’ (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006: 119). The scene is like one on a proscenium stage, and the viewer is in the audience, an onlooker.

Ponting gave his photographs captions which assist the viewer to understand what pictures are about, but in *The Great White South* he incorrectly captioned another version of the birthday photograph as the Midwinter Dinner. *90° South* repeats the substitution, but uses the birthday version shown in Figure 19.

Ponting was usually meticulous in his records, and it must be assumed that he wanted a midwinter scene for the film, but preferred the other photograph, and practised a small deception. He had a keen sense of his audience, and may well have recognised Figure 19’s greater potential for audience engagement.

Figures 19 and 20 also have symbolic elements: the banners, reminiscent of the knights’ banners in St George’s chapel, Windsor, and other English imperial sites, evoke again the concept of knightly chivalry, with its operant cultural models (Gee 2005) of loyalty (emphasised in *The Great White South* [160-163] by the use of vocabulary such as ‘devotion’, ‘bonds’, ‘tie’, ‘faithful’, ‘trusted’), and strength of character (‘determination’, ‘resolute’). The allusion to chivalry again evokes the concept of a quest. The two photographs operate also within a military discourse, bringing to mind festivities in an officers’ mess-room. Many of the men had naval or army backgrounds. There is a hierarchy evident, with Scott at the head; the lower ranks are absent, having their party out of view.

More than any other Ponting photographs, these two reflect the patriotic and imperial underpinnings which had raised expedition funds, sent crowds to cheer them along the stages of their voyage south, and maintained high expectations of success at the Pole. The men represent a globally-spread power. They are in a contest against the uncompromisingly extreme environment illustrated by the Ponting landscapes discussed earlier. There are two dozen men at the base. At Cape Adare, some 600 kilometers away, the six members of the Northern Party are wintering under very difficult conditions. Almost 700 kilometers away in

another direction, they know there are twenty men at the Norwegian Antarctic Expedition's base on the Bay of Whales. There are no other humans on this whole continent. Cosy in their home away from home on these darkest winter days, they look confident. They have brought a microcosm of home and of British technology to this place, and consider themselves well set up for the task ahead.

Ponting had always been interested in subjects involved in their work, and his earliest photographs had included artisans. Figure 21 shows meteorologist Simpson.



21. Dr Simpson at the magnetometer

In a cave in a small glacier ... he had installed ... [a] magnetograph .... [He] also had a small hut [where] he incarcerated himself for several hours each week to make 'absolute' calculations with a magnetometer, to check the instrument in the ice grotto. (Ponting 2001:116, 117)

The expedition's meteorological instruments were of high quality for their time.

Simpson's weather predictions would prove accurate for the polar party's outward journey, but surface temperatures in Antarctica can be very erratic. It would turn out to be unusually cold on the Barrier (Ross Ice Shelf) in those crucial weeks (Solomon 2001).

In this photograph, the concentration of the scientist emphasises the delicacy and precision of the task. The instrument is represented as an extension of the man, as in some of the photographs of Ponting with his cameras (see Fig. 1). Strong, even light pervades the photograph, suggesting the illuminating power of science. The expedition carried out valuable scientific research in a number of fields, with twenty-five volumes of findings published in the dozen years after it (Jones 2003).

The work of cavalry officer Captain Oates was concerned with the care of the expedition's ponies. Figure 22 shows him emerging from the stable, shovel in hand, the grounded pose suggesting stoicism and strength, in line with the personality as represented by Ponting in *The Great White South*:

an outstanding figure ... a man of few words ... unwavering strength of purpose ... written on [his] firm face .... He would pass hours on end in the frigid temperature of the stable—often, I am convinced, merely because of his desire to be near the ponies (161-162).

It needs to be noted that the 'outstanding personalities' in that chapter of *The Great White South* are all described in glowing terms. Elsewhere, Oates has been described as 'a man who held strong views, which he never failed to express' (Smith 2002:54), suggesting he could be difficult. But Scott's eventual polar journal account would make Oates' name synonymous with noble sacrifice.

In Figure 22 his gaze meets, yet does not quite meet, the viewer's, as if he is preoccupied. He was constantly anxious about the ponies' ability to perform. Nine of the ten ponies would not survive the first year. Of course, the impassive expression may also be due simply to having to hold the pose in the freezing cold, as was complained about by the expeditioners generally.





22. Captain Oates at the stable door, 30 Aug 1911

In Figure 23 Oates and Petty Officer Abbott are shown with the ponies, which are hitched together in a ragged line across the picture. The long shot keeps the viewer at a distance, less involved. The photograph looks less posed, more natural. The men are on the far right. They and two of the ponies are somewhat closer to the viewer than the rest, and form the most eye-catching element in the composition. The attention of the men seems to be on the feet of one pony. Another pony watches carefully. It is this animal's face which is the clearest in the photograph. It is as if there is a question in his gaze.





23. Captain Oates and Seaman Abbott picketing ponies, 1911

Apart from the sailors' pet black cat, which features briefly in the cine-film, animals in Ponting's photographs are of two types: wild, and utility. Both types situate subject, photographer and viewer in a power relationship. The expeditioners killed seals and penguins for food and for scientific study; the utility animals, ponies and dogs, were there to serve the aims of the expedition, though their servitude was tempered by the care and also the affection which humans provided. The pony's gaze in Figure 23 is mildly curious, dogged, submissive. All the animals' bodies are more or less bowed.

The inclusion of Seaman Abbott with Oates in Figure 23 is a reminder that Ponting took very many photographs of the 'men', as the Shore Party roll in *The Great White South* listed the lower ranks. Nine of these photographs were included in the book. The photographs in Figures 24 and 25 are two of these.



24. Mechanic Lashly, 1911

Ponting describes Lashly, Chief Stoker R.N., as a splendid, efficient man. He had been with Scott on the *Discovery* Expedition, and Ponting writes that Lashly had then responded with ‘resource, strength and presence of mind’ (168) to rescue Scott and Petty Officer Evans out of a crevasse. He is seen here with one of the motor tractors. A tractor could haul three sledges, but they were very slow and gave constant trouble in the conditions.

Lashly’s chin is down, his features angular, lined and reticent as he gazes past the viewer. His gloved hands look huge and clumsy. Because we know he was very efficient, the clumsiness is a reminder of the severity of the environment. Once again, the subject demonstrates the verb ‘to pont’ invented by the expeditioners.

Figure 25 is an indoor picture, heated by the kitchen stove. The cook is making rhubarb pies. Ponting says Clissold was ‘a *good* cook’ (130). This too was skilled work.



25. Clissold the cook.

The representations of lesser ranking expeditioners, while part of his brief, are also evidence of an egalitarianism in Ponting when it came to subjects in the context of their work. The work of the stable man, the mechanic and the cook was an intrinsic and vital part of the team venture. The images convey a sense of this in their detail—Abbott’s head inclined towards pony and Oates as they confer; the complexity of sprocket and track on Lashly’s tractor; the array of provisions and utensils around Clissold.

Ponting also took many photographs of those other important members of the expedition, the dogs. These were utility animals, but the men grew fond of them. Scott’s decision not to use them on the final stage of the polar journey, as

Amundsen did, may well have been due largely to his liking and compassion for them (Murray 2008).



26. Leader of sledge dogs, Osman

Osman was the head dog. In a Southern Ocean gale he had been washed overboard, and back on board, and Ponting believed the experience had made the once fierce animal gentle and good-natured. In Figure 26 he sits like a docile family pet. The background is de-emphasised, but the links of his chain are sharply clear. This is a working dog, forever subservient.

Some of the men had a particularly arduous year, and none more so than Bowers and Wilson, who were on the Southern Party to lay depots from late January to mid-April, then with Cherry-Garrard did the five-week mid-winter journey to Cape Crozier, and finally accompanied Scott to the Pole at the end of the year.



27. Bowers, 13 Apr. 1911.

Lieut. Bowers is described by Ponting as short, ‘limbs as tough as teak’ (160), capable, and one of the Leader’s right hand men. ‘No more cheery, joyful soul ever lived than he, nor any more disdainful of hardship’ (161).

Hardship, however, shows on his face in the photograph in Figure 27. There is a trace of a smile, but the overall expression is stoical. He stares straight at the viewer, but the eyes do not give much away. The photograph was taken the same day as the Scott image shown in Figure 17. Unlike Scott, Bowers stands behind his sledge, and he looks slight behind its bulk.

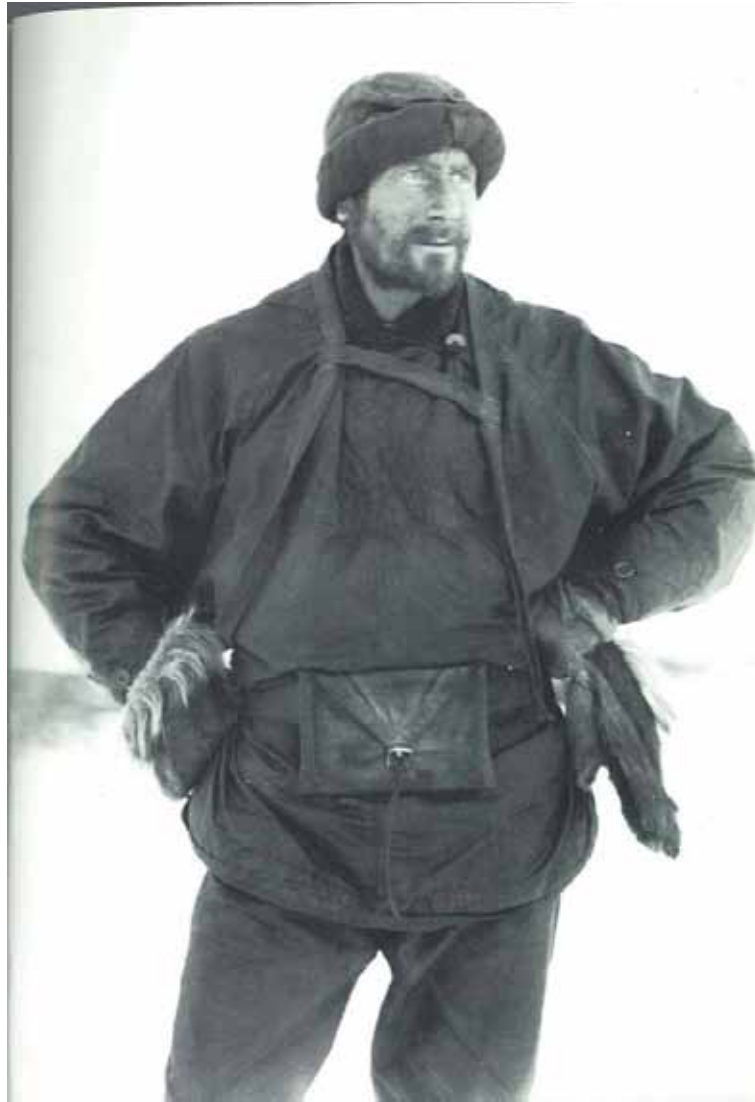


Ponting described Dr Wilson as:

one of the most lovable of men. Like his Chief, Wilson had learnt the true philosophy of living—that happiness is not to be attained in the pursuit of riches; but in the contentment of spirit born of knowledge, congenial occupation, and a useful and well-spent life. (160-161)

As has been noted, Ponting's descriptions of the 'outstanding personalities' in *The Great White South* are full of praise. Wilson, however, was universally liked and admired. It is interesting that Ponting uses his description of Wilson's philosophy to make a favourable link to that of Scott.

The photograph in Figure 28 was taken a week after the return of the Southern Party. Wilson looks fit and totally relaxed, in a pose that suggests to the viewer that this is a man comfortable with who he is. Although he is looking away from the viewer, the face is amiable, and the impression is that this is a congenial person.



28. Wilson, 21 Apr. 1911.

Since the 1901-4 expedition, Wilson had wanted to collect emperor penguin eggs at stages of incubation, in order to study their embryology. Late in June, he set off with Bowers and Cherry-Garrard for the breeding-ground at Cape Crozier.



29. Dr Wilson, Lieut. Bowers, Cherry-Garrard before leaving for Cape Crozier, 27 June 1911.

Ponting photographed them before departure. They stand in a pool of flashlight in front of the icy hut, Wilson in the middle, looking simultaneously earnest and at ease. Once again, the hands on hips suggest self-confidence. Bowers and Cherry-Garrard look somewhat nonplussed, and both look young. Behind them is a laden sledge and camp detritus. The placement of the trio left of centre, the way they are caught in the light, and the general messiness of the surrounds, make the men look somewhat naïve: three ordinary-looking Britishers, kitted up for a sortie into the icy wastes. The photograph would have been unremarkable in Ponting's work, except for the follow-up one which he took on their return.



30. Dr Wilson, Lieut. Bowers and Cherry-Garrard on return from winter trip to Cape Crozier, 1 Aug. 1911.

The contrast is shocking. The hardship and danger of the journey have been appalling, and fully worthy of Cherry-Garrard's eventual book title, *The Worst Journey in the World*, in which he would write: 'Ponting's face was a study as he ran up; he failed to recognise any of us and stopped dead with a blank look' (2003:176). One is reminded of the words of the first person to reach explorer Douglas Mawson, returning alone from his nightmare journey in 1913: 'My God, which one are you?' (Bickel 2000:240).

Ponting writes: 'Their looks haunted me for days' (2001:154). Wilson faces the viewer, but his eyes are not focused. He looks numb with exhaustion. The younger men also look worn out. Bowers is having a hot drink and it has his full attention. Cherry-Garrard looks at us with dead eyes.

They had three eggs to show for their ordeal. Wilson believed science would learn much from them. He would never know that this would not be so. The photograph does not convey any sense of achievement. Exhausted men, a meal of

basics, the stacked necessities in the background, all speak rather of dejection. They look destitute. They could be paupers eating in a charity kitchen.

An unusual photograph recording another incident reminds us further of the dangers faced by the expedition. Surgeon Atkinson was badly frost-bitten, and next day the fingers of his hand were covered in blisters ‘almost as big as the fingers themselves’ (Ponting 2001:147). The photograph shows a dark, lumpy paw, the blisters in glaring light. The image connects with us on the primal level where lurk our fears of illness and death.

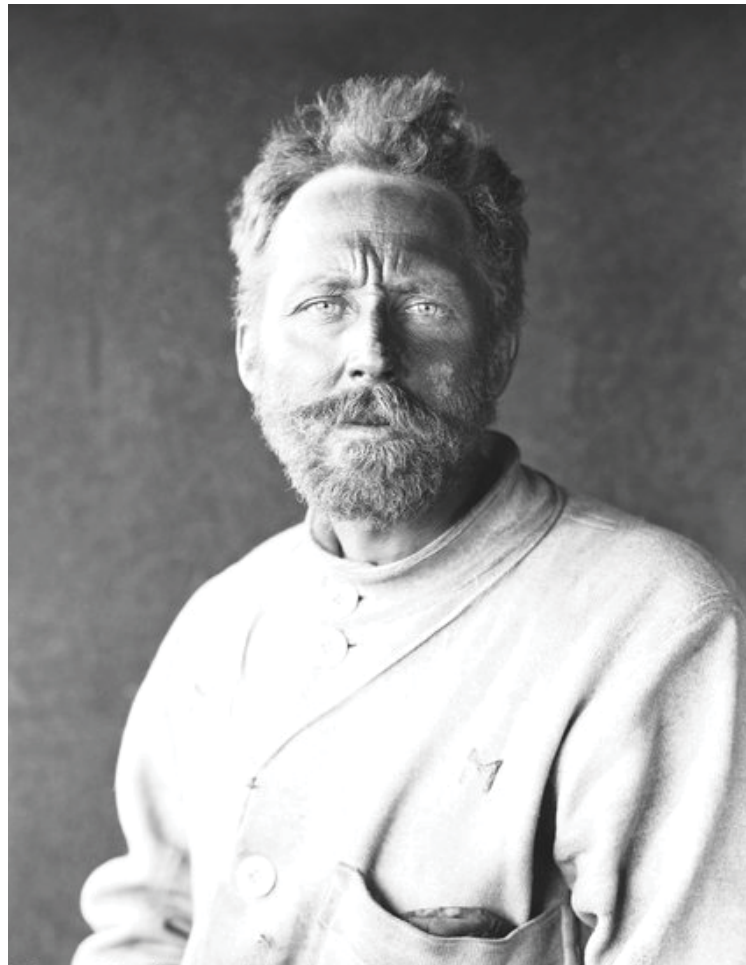


31. Dr Atkinson's frostbitten hand, 5 July 1911.

Ponting took a number of striking close-up portraits of the men who returned from the Barrier in early January 1912, having been part of the support team for the polar party in its earlier stages. In all these portraits the interactional system of the gaze dominates, directly addressing viewers and establishing an imaginary relationship with them, as in other photographs discussed here, but made more powerful by close-up, and, the photographs suggest, as an effect of the grueling



journey. The gazes in Figures 32 and 33 have an intensity bordering on preternatural.



32. Cecil H. Meares on his return from the Barrier.

Meares had accompanied the polar party as far as the foot of the Beardmore Glacier, then returned to base with the dogs and their driver. Keohane (Fig. 33) was in the group that assisted the polar party to the top of the Beardmore Glacier, then returned to base, a march of 1,126 miles.



33. Petty Officer Keohane

These late portraits have a degree of intimacy that Ponting did not seek in the earlier ones. In *The Great White South*, he says (160):

When a little band of men live through an Antarctic winter in intimate association under a single roof, the character and true purpose of each become bared to his comrades, almost to his inmost soul. In the crowded throng of life 'make-believe' is too often a disguise that remains uncloaked; but in a Polar hut no man could hide behind a mask ...

But in his descriptions of the men in his book, and in his photographs, he allowed them their privacy. 'Scott writing in his journal' (Fig. 15) is an intimate glimpse which at the same time keeps the viewer at a distance. In 'Scott 12 April 1911' (Fig. 17), the tired eyes of the subject have an aloofness that stops the viewer getting too close. In the portraits of Meares and Keohane, however, that sense of privacy is removed.

In both portraits, the subjects are looking into the light, which intensifies the lines of their faces and recalls the harsh sunlight of their journeys. Meares' face shows sun-blackening around the outline of goggles. The lighting adds a dimension to the portraiture, allowing the viewer to see deeper into the subjects, revealing fortitude but also something of the hardship and awe they must have experienced in the place Ponting thought of as the Great Alone.

Ponting himself had travelled only the first twenty-five miles with the polar party. It was impractical to haul his heavy gear any further, and he had much wildlife photography to do before leaving the Antarctic. He wrote that, beyond the Great Ice Barrier, 'there would be nothing to photograph but the level plain of boundless, featureless ice ...' (Ponting 2001:185). This may have masked regret. The portraits of Meares and Keohane suggest that Ponting was deeply curious about 'the stark and sullen solitudes that sentinel the Pole', a quote from Robert Service which he used in *The Great White South*. What had those gazes seen?

Ponting did not include any of the late portraits in his book or film, but their power has been recognised by more recent compilers of polar photography, with a portrait of Meares appearing on the cover of Lewis-Jones' *Face to Face: Polar Portraits* (2008).

They also bring this section on photographs of the expeditioners to a close. It has traced their activities from group celebration to individual ordeal, with the photographs adding an insightful dimension to historical knowledge of the expedition.

## **Wildlife**

Ponting's photographs and film include a great many shots of wildlife. These were his most direct and significant contribution to the scientific aims of the expedition, recording the behaviour of Antarctic animals and birds. While they were of great interest and value to contemporary life science, and to Ponting's

audience, most do not make interesting material for visual analysis here, and a sample will suffice.



34. Weddell seal calf

Supine seals do not necessarily make good pictures, but Weddell seals are generally placid and easily approached, and in Figure 34 Ponting captured an engaging image of a pup looking into the camera. Animal images can evoke a range of responses in viewers. Neotonous characteristics—a baby-like appearance—call forth a nurturing response (Baker 2001). In one scene in *90° South* expeditioners rescue a baby seal by tossing a harpoon at a killer whale. In Ponting's time no compunctions precluded interference with the natural world: the cultural model that applied was the defence of the small and weak, an aspect of chivalry.

Modern readers might be surprised at the representation of killer whales in *The Great White South*. They are 'devils of the sea' (66) 'wolves of the sea' (86), 'evil' (71) and 'sinister' (89). A killer whale chasing a seal is a 'horror ...looking like some grim leviathan of war' (71). The concept of the bad animal (Baker 2001) is logically inconsistent, but one that fits within the situated meaning (Gee

2005) of the perils of Antarctica. Ponting, it will be remembered, had his own terrifying experience with killer whales (see Fig. 3).



35. Angry penguin attacking Herbert Ponting, Cape Royds, 1911.

Ponting took many photographs of Adélie penguins, included footage about their activities and behaviour in his film, and wrote at some length about them in *The Great White South*. He liked them, calling them—anthropomorphically—‘lovable little people’ and ‘the comedians of the south’ (231, 233). He took several photographs of himself standing among them.

Figure 35 shows Ponting at a loss while under attack from one—a rare occasion. Many of the surrounding birds are sitting on stony nests, and Ponting’s foot is perilously close to one. The photograph illustrates a number of aspects of Adélie behaviour. Ponting’s face is shadowed. The image calls to mind Gulliver among the Lilliputians, and is in line with Ponting’s sense of humour as evidenced in his book and his film: he has a laugh at himself, but he does not give much away.



## ***Cine-film***

*90° South: With Scott to the Antarctic* is Ponting's 1933 re-make of the footage he shot on location in Antarctica in 1910-1912. It is the only version analysed here, the earlier ones not being available.

The first scenes of the film now seem very dated. For this version, Ponting added an introductory scene with himself and fellow expeditioner Lieutenant Evans (Vice-Admiral by 1933). Evans, in civilian clothes, has his hands awkwardly in his pockets. 'Ponko', looking unwell, seems more at ease, but falls short of the excellent manner and delivery Hurley described after seeing some of his early lectures. The scene, with a plain curtain backdrop, is stagy. The other major contributing factor to the film's dated quality is the sound, also added in 1933. Ponting's narration has the clipped tone and occasional forced humour of old British newsreels, and the music is largely the nondescript, background-filler of old movies. Nevertheless, today's viewer soon comes to appreciate the great deal of value in a film depicting the challenges of Antarctica at such an early stage in both its exploration and in film-making, and overcoming to a considerable extent the demands and constraints of this context.

The title appears against a background sketch of an Antarctic valley, icicles in the foreground and dripping from the title itself. A dirge-like fanfare accompanies the dedication text 'to the undying memory ...' followed by a formal photograph of Scott in naval uniform, then one of an iceberg. The tragedy is foreshadowed. Evans introduces the film, emphasising the scientific aims of the expedition, and praising the film, shot under great difficulties, as a 'lasting tribute to Scott's memory'. Ponting enters: 'I have endeavoured to arrange this film in such a manner that, when you have seen it, you will personally feel that you have taken part in a great adventure.' The themes of scientific endeavour, photographic challenges, commemoration and adventure are thus introduced, with Ponting, camera artist and fellow expeditioner, explicitly situated amid these by Evans' introduction.

The next forty minutes of the film are busy, the mood buoyant, as Ponting shows us the expectation and bustle of departure, the voyage, the wonders of icebergs and the Great Ice Barrier, and setting up base in a hive of cheerful activity. Ponting shows himself hauling a sledge, setting up a tripod and placing a camera on it. Footage of seals and penguins amounts to about thirteen minutes, or nineteen per cent of the film.



36. Mother seals fighting (transparency from Ponting's cine negative)

Ponting's commentary in the animal scenes is heavy with anthropomorphic humour ('nice little domestic scenes ... mama and papa .... a big fellow in a hurry to keep an appointment'). The approach, generally avoided by modern documentary filmmakers, would have lightened the tone of the film for contemporary audiences. Ponting believed 'the masses [would] not be educated unless they [could] be amused' (quoted in Jones 2003:185). He made an effort to make his film educational but accessible, with maps and understandable explanations as well as humour.

For recreation the men play football and chase penguins. Most of the time they work, building the hut, transporting supplies to depots, sledging with dogs, carrying out scientific work. The many shots of smiling expeditioners are in

contrast to the still photographs, where, due to the convention of the time and the requirements of the technology, smiles are rare. There are both posed and natural representations of Scott. He is shown relaxed, sociable and smiling in footage before departure. In Antarctica he is shown smiling and patting a pony, and several times as part of group activities—in the football game and hauling sledges. There is also the famous still photograph of Scott writing in his journal. The impression is of an amiable, willing participant in work and play, but also very much the Leader.

Throughout this first half of the film, its imagery has reinforced the position of the audience within a sociocultural field of solidarity with ‘their’ explorers. Sailors boxing on deck, flags, officers and men working together, ponies, dogs, the game of football—these, the audience recognises, are ‘people like us’ (Gee 2005:2). The film draws on the bonding of cultural and social capital (Putnam 2000) in order to reinforce engagement.

The last twenty minutes of the film reconstruct the Pole journey. The section is prefaced by a still photograph of a cross on Observation Hill commemorating a man who died during the 1901-04 *Discovery* Expedition, with Ponting’s narration: ‘In the midst of life we are in death ... He died in the performance of his duty’. This foreshadowing scene is immediately followed by text describing the aims and preparations of the polar party. Four men (the eventual polar party minus Oates) pre-enact the pitching of their tent, meal preparation and bedding down for the night. To film the scene inside, Ponting uses a cutaway tent, similar to a technique later to be used in Flaherty’s *Nanook of the North*, where the impression that a scene was taking place inside an igloo was achieved by shooting with half an igloo as backdrop (Nichols 2001). Ponting narrates how Scott said to him: ‘What fun it will be when we are home again and see this at the cinema! Everyone will be able to share in the benefits of our success.’ Audiences would have responded emotionally to this painful irony. Voicing over footage of the party’s departure, Ponting tells how he farewelled them, ‘wondering when I should see them again.’

The final twelve minutes of the film introduce Amundsen, briefly, as a threat to their goal. A photograph of the explorer is shown. He is dressed in furs, facing away from the camera. The representation is remote and foreign. A frontal photograph of Scott follows (Fig. 16). The audience is by now well-engaged with their hero. The film has been discursively constructed throughout in order to secure this bond.

The last section ('A Bitter Return') relates the tragedy as it unfolded. With foreknowledge of the disaster, audiences might nevertheless watch the film with a certain wonder. These capable, cheery men busy with their activities have looked so prosaic in this extraordinary place. How have they become 'the honoured dead'? After the film has ended, a certain disconnect lingers: Ponting has told the story, he has traced their journey on a map, he has put Scott's handwriting on the screen and read aloud the last messages; but he cannot *show* what happened. He was not there. Moreover, because he wished to construct the expedition as 'a great adventure', he de-emphasised the extremes of Antarctica until the tragic end, and the true conflict in the story always lay not so much in the race with Amundsen, but in the struggle with the environment. The inclusion of still photographs taken by the men themselves at the Pole comes as a shock. They look, as Lynch wrote (1989:301), 'like the walking dead'.



37. One of the still photographs of the Polar Party at the South Pole which Ponting included in *90° South*.

Art work (uncredited) provides the background for much of Ponting's grave final narration, which is at its most effective here. The camera moves slowly across a painted scene depicting swirled patterns of snow, ice and cloud. Photographs of each of the polar party are shown. The film closes with Scott's last words, in his own handwriting, superimposed on a still of the memorial snow cairn built later over the bodies of the men, then a shot of the London statue of Scott, looking youthful, his clothing, headgear and long ice-axe reminiscent of an image of a knight with spear. The statue, the work of Scott's widow, is photographed from a low angle against the sky. In the construction of these final scenes, the film suggests apotheosis.

*90° South* contains a powerful sense of the vast stillness and awe-inspiring beauty of the Antarctic landscape, mostly conveyed by the strategic positioning of still photographs between cinematic footage. The limitations of his cine-



camera, on a tripod, meant that Ponting in 1910-12 could not approach the versatility of later filmmakers. His camera angles are mostly eye-level, a notable exception being footage achieved by spread-eagling across planks rigged out from the side of the *Terra Nova*, to film the ship moving through pack ice—footage unique in its time (Riffenburgh & Cruwys 1998). He photographed himself doing this (Fig. 38), but did not include the still in the film.



38. Ponting cinematographing the prow of the *Terra Nova* going through pack ice

On the whole, he was very much restricted by his cumbersome apparatus and difficult conditions, and was not able to develop his own ‘grammar’ of film as it was evolving in the feature film, and as Flaherty would do in 1922 in *Nanook of the North* (Barnouw 1974). Ponting could do extreme long shots, long shots and medium shots; for close-ups he could zoom into an inserted still, as when he shows stills of scientific or other activity, followed by close-ups of faces, inviting the audience into a more personal relationship. His camera could swivel on its tripod, but ability to shoot from different angles was limited. He could pan, or alternatively point the camera at a moving target, for example, at sledgers as they

moved across the visual point of view; or he would let the motion of the *Terra Nova* carry him past a target, such as the Great Ice Barrier.

In his 1933 version all Ponting had to work with was the footage he had obtained twenty years earlier, filming a series of sometimes discontinuous shots over periods of time, often opportunistically and always under difficult conditions. The quality of the final film product depended heavily on his editing, and with audience expectations in the 1920s and early 1930s increasing due to the growing sophistication of feature films, he was under some pressure to edit the footage in such a way as to make the new versions of his film acceptable. The critical success of *90° South* is a tribute to his skill. He made good use of the dissolve technique, with only a few jump cuts (where sequential shots are taken from slightly varying camera angles) drawing undue attention to the editing process. He also used inter-cutting between footage and stills effectively, as when he shifts from footage of dogs to stills of individual dog faces, then back again to the group footage.

The inter-cutting appears seamless. Siebel (2003:176) says that Ponting's camera lingers sensually on what he wants us to see, 'forcing active visual engagement by giving us time to imaginatively and empathetically enter the realm of the moving image'. This is only partly true, for the lingering is largely the result of his technique of juxtaposing stills within the film. There are over eighty stills. They include ponies, individual dogs, images of Erebus and the Barne glacier, different ice formations on sea and on the Barrier, individual expeditioners at work, and well-known stills such as 'A grotto in an iceberg' and several of those analysed in this chapter, including 'Terra Nova in pack ice', 'Captain Scott writing', 'Scott's birthday', and 'Wilson'.

The film's credits include W.L. Trytel as Musical Director. Low (1997:175) refers to typical Trytel work as 'rambling and irrelevant accompaniment, churning on regardless of changes of shot, sequence or mood', which unfortunately applies to his work on *90° South*. Identifiable segments are the climactic theme from Mendelssohn's Hebrides Overture during footage of the *Terra Nova* moving through pack ice, and the nursery rhyme 'Baa baa black

sheep' with footage of penguin chicks. Near the end of the film, an elegiac cello effectively accompanies a sketch of the tragic little tent. Film databases (for example, the British Film Institute Film and TV Database, and the Internet Movie Database) also list 'original music' by H. Walford Davies, a reputable composer of the time, but it is not possible to identify his contribution.

*90° South* is a flawed legacy, but most of its failings were due to the circumstances of the original filming. It is hard for a modern viewer to fully appreciate its impact when it was first released, so many years ago. It is fairer to follow the lead of contemporary critics: it was a considerable technical achievement, a victory over extreme environmental challenges, and it extended the capacity of cinematography in an exciting and influential way.